

## Microgreens By Diane Miller

Microgreens seem to be the new “in” thing for restaurants, cafes, farmers markets and home gardens. They are young vegetable seedlings grown and harvested just after the cotyledon leaves (an embryonic leaf in seed-bearing plants) have developed. They are baby plants. These seedlings are aromatic, nutritious and filled with flavor. Microgreens contain all the vitamins, minerals and antioxidant properties that full-grown vegetables contain, but are grown in a much smaller space and time than an outdoor garden. Some more popular varieties are wheatgrass, broccoli, cilantro, radish and cabbage.



Microgreens are so easy to grow with adequate light and moisture. You need a container, a few inches in depth, a planting medium like soil or coir (fibrous material from coconuts) and your desired seeds. Your container can be any shallow container from a reused fast food container to a purchased plexiglass tray. I use a plexiglass tray as I enjoy seeing the very first signs of life when the roots start to reach out.

Next, you prepare the soil, or coir, by moistening it until pliable and press it into your container. The amount of soil and water will depend on your chosen container. Spread your chosen seed into in a single layer on top of your moist soil medium and lightly tamp into soil. Moisten seeds and soil with a spray bottle. I covered mine with a paper towel and began spraying several times daily. I live in a condominium and started my indoors mini hobby farm on a southwest window sill above my kitchen sink. I keep the paper towel moist until the seedlings start to emerge, then remove the towel. Continue moistening several times daily, the soil and your sprouts, until they are 3-4 inches tall. Then let the harvest begin when the first true leaves appear. Cut the tops and stems above the soil being careful not to pull soil out with seedlings. Rinse and eat. You can continue to harvest as you use them or harvest all at once rinse and dry, storing them in the refrigerator for days up to a week. A salad spinner works well to dry a big crop. When growing, if they get droopy, increase the moisture; if leggy, they may need more light which may mean a different window or supplemental light. The temperature on their window sill averaged 75 F.

It is so exciting to see the little plants emerge. We’re all familiar with sprouts which are microgreens younger cousins but are not grown in soil and are essentially harvested roots while microgreens are grown in a soil medium, cultivated, cut and eaten as baby vegetables.

For beginners with limited mobility and space these are perfect. Easy to grow year-round in a small space with a quick harvest. It’s a gratifying way to get your greens with little risk in time or money. If you have a poor harvest or don’t like the seed you grew, you just start another crop and within weeks you’re ready to harvest the new crop. You can even experiment with a mixture of your favorite greens.

My favorites so far are spicy radish greens. I trim them at several inches tall, rinse and put right into my salad, or on my sandwich. Many restaurants and cafes are using microgreens as a satisfying, visually appealing tasty treat. They add color and flavor - all packed in a small healthy package. If you want spice try radish, mustard or arugula. For an earthy note try beets, wheat grass or cabbage. If a certain spice is your favorite grow dill! They all add a delightful fresh crunch to your meal. I'm using organic seeds from the internet bought in ounces to assure nothing added is on my seeds, and buying ounces is much more economical than seed packets.

Microgreens can be pricy when sold at markets so it's good news that they are so easy and satisfying to grow. You can grow them year-round with a new crop almost weekly. You have your very own farm at your fingertips. There are dozens of seed varieties making it easy to customize your harvest mixture. They are a healthy element to add to your salads, smoothies, juices - actually almost any and everything you can imagine. Growing your own microgreens is an easy, satisfying and inexpensive way to have fresh greens. It is great for beginners, fun and incredibly gratifying. I hope you try growing microgreens. I know I'm glad I did. Happy Eating!

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*UCCE Master Gardeners of Tuolumne and Calaveras Counties can answer home gardening questions. Call 209-533-5912 or go to: <http://ucanr.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=7269> to fill out our easy-to-use problem questionnaire. Check out our website at: [http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu/Master\\_Gardeners/](http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu/Master_Gardeners/) You can also find us on Facebook.*